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# THE BOOK OF FILIAL DUTY

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# The Wisdom of the East Series

EDITED BY

L. CRANMER-BYNG

Dr. S. A. KAPADIA

## THE BOOK OF FILIAL DUTY



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Hsiao Ching  
WISDOM OF THE EAST

# THE BOOK OF FILIAL DUTY

TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE  
OF THE HSIAO CHING

BY IVAN CHÊN

FIRST SECRETARY TO THE CHINESE LEGATION

WITH THE TWENTY-FOUR EXAMPLES  
FROM THE CHINESE



LONDON  
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## EDITORIAL NOTE

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THE object of the Editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that, in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West—the old world of Thought and the new of Action. In this endeavour, and in their own sphere, they are but followers of the highest example in the land. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour. Finally, in thanking press and public for the very cordial reception given to the “Wisdom of the East” Series, they wish to state that no pains have been spared to secure the best specialists for the treatment of the various subjects at hand.

L. CRANMER-BYNG.  
S. A. KAPADIA.

NORTHBROOK SOCIETY,  
185 PICCADILLY, W.

## INTRODUCTION

### I. THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK

THE *Hsiao Ching*, or *Book of Filial Duty*, is generally held to be the work of an unknown pupil of Tsêng Ts'an, the disciple of Confucius, to whom is attributed the famous Confucian classic known as *The Greater Learning*. Certainly it can be traced back as far as 400 B.C., within a century from the death of Confucius. The preservation of the text in its present form is due to the Emperor Ming Huang (A.D. 685-762), one of the most fascinating characters in Chinese history, who had it engraved, together with eleven other of the Confucian writings, on tablets of stone and set up in his capital of Chang-an. He afterwards added a commentary of his own, which is still extant, and has proved invaluable to all commentators of a later period. *The Book of Filial Duty* is often found in China bound up with another treatise called the *Hsiao Hsüeh*, or *Teaching for the Young*, of which the

following is a specimen : “The way to become a student is with meekness and humility, receiving with confidence every word spoken by the master. The pupil, when he sees men of virtue, should try to follow in their steps ; when he hears wise sayings, he should try to conform to them. He must not harbour evil designs, but always act honourably. Whether at home or abroad, he must have a fixed abode, and resort with those who are well disposed, regulating his demeanour with care, and curbing the passions.”

Few books have enjoyed greater popularity amongst all classes in China than *The Book of Filial Duty*. It may be called *The Book of Emperors*, from the fact that so many Emperors, both before and after Ming Huang, have commented upon it. Equally it is *The Book of Youth*, being the first treatise of importance placed in the hands of children, after the horn books of elementary instruction. The reason for its survival after so many centuries is not hard to seek. Family life has always been, from time immemorial, the foundation-stone of the Chinese Empire, and filial piety is the foundation-stone of family life. Nor does this duty of son to father merely extend to the living. The living head of the family pays due reverence to the countless ancestors who have preceded him. A witty Chinese writer once remarked that in the West family life only began after death—

in the family vault. Here, at any rate, after years of separation and divided interests, the members met to enjoy a common oblivion. I cannot but think that there is some exaggeration in this ; yet not even the greatest apologist of Western methods will venture to deny that the Chinese and indeed most Oriental ideals of family life are superior to his own. Whilst living, only the calls of Empire, or the demands of their profession, may keep relations apart ; but the interests of the family are always greater than the interests of the individual, and no exile is without hope of return to the home of his fathers. The dead will not be forgotten, for it will be the duty of their sons to offer sacrifice to their shades. The death-days of two generations of parents are kept sacred with solemn festival, and the nameless and unnumbered dead have their special days of ceremony and remembrance in the spring and autumn. Every house has its family shrine, every village its hall of ancestors. Thus the filial piety of the survivors honours those who have gone.

As regards the living, respect is the great essential of daily intercourse. The subject respects his emperor, the son his father, the wife her husband, and the younger brother his elder brother. But respect is not only for those older than ourselves, or of superior station. The wisdom of Confucius is nowhere more clearly

shown than in his utterance concerning the respect to be paid to youth : " A youth is to be regarded with respect. How do we know that his future will not be equal to our present ? If he reach the age of forty or fifty, and has not made himself heard of, then he will indeed not be worthy of respect."

*Maxima debetur pueris reverentia !*

The Chinese national spirit is a spirit of continuity ; the spirit of the Confucian philosophy is a spirit of harmony with the environment of daily life. " Confucius," says Tzŭ-ssŭ, " possessed, as if by hereditary transmission, the virtues of Yao and Shun [Emperors of the Golden Age], and modelled himself on Wên and Wu [first King of the Chou dynasty, 1133 B.C.] as his exemplars. Above all, he kept in unison with the seasons of the sky ; below, he conformed to the water and the land.

" We may liken him unto the sky and earth in respect of the universality with which they uphold and sustain things, the universality with which they overspread and enfold things. We may liken him unto the four seasons in respect of their varied march ; unto the sun and moon in respect of their alternate shining.

" All things are kept in train together without their injuring one another ; their ways go on together without interfering one with another : the smaller forces in river streams, the greater

forces in ample transformations. It is this that makes the sky and earth so great.”<sup>1</sup>

The first environment of the human soul is that of the family. Before we can become good subjects, before we can aspire to study nature and mould ourselves upon the laws of heaven and earth, we must first of all learn to become good sons, to complete the unity of family life. All things will be added in their due course. To the Chinese mind the successful policy in life is a policy of adjustment. This policy runs from highest to lowest, and back again from lowest to highest. The Emperor adjusts himself to the requirements of his great Ministers, they in their turn to the provincial governors, they in their turn to the local magistrates, and so on down the scale of social order. So this policy of adjustment works equally upwards from the youngest son of the meanest family to the Emperor himself, who adjusts his methods to those employed by his August Father. As *The Book of Odes* says :

That great and noble Prince displayed  
The sense of right in all he wrought ;  
Adjusting justly, grade by grade,  
The spirit of his wisdom swayed  
Peasant and peer ; the crowd, the court.

It is for this reason that *The Book of Filial*

<sup>1</sup> Translated by John Carey Hall in *Chinese Civilisation*, by Pierre Laffitte.



*Duty* commences with a chapter on "Filial Piety in the Son of Heaven." The Emperor is, the Emperor always has been, the father of the greatest family on earth—the Chinese nation.

## II. THE TWENTY-FOUR EXAMPLES OF FILIAL DUTY

Instead of the *Hsiao Hsüeh*, or *Teaching for the Young*, which is usually grouped with *The Book of Filial Duty*, I have chosen *The Twenty-four Examples of Filial Duty* by way of illustration to the *Hsiao Ching*. They are naïve and terse, and yet not without their simple charm. Even where they lend themselves to exaggeration, as in the story of the old gentleman who dressed himself in gay garments and frisked in front of his very venerable parents, they are not meaningless nor devoid of humanity. The lesson to be drawn is that our duty towards our parents is the first obligation in life, and that we should go, if necessary, to all lengths to fulfil it. Nothing is known of the authorship of these stories, or the time in which they are written. Each story is accompanied by its commentary, and probably the stories themselves originated during the Ming dynasty (A.D. 1368–1644), the commentaries belonging mostly to the latter years of that dynasty. The period dealt with in these tales is a very wide one, and ranges from the time of the great Emperor Shun (*circa* 2300 B.C.) down to the Sung

dynasty (A.D. 900–1200). There have been many editions of *The Twenty-four Examples* in Chinese, mostly embellished with quaint and original woodcuts, of which the figure on the cover of the present volume, kindly supplied by Mrs. Lionel Giles, is an example.

### III. FILIAL DUTY AND PARENTAL LOVE

In conclusion, I hope none of my readers will imagine, from these examples and the treatise that precedes them, that Chinese family life is cold and repellent, and devoid of mutual love. The moment a tiny life enters the circle it is guarded by the triple walls of kinship. In the children our parents return to us ; in the children we survive. All through Chinese history the exile longs for return to wife and children. All through Chinese literature you will find allusion to the love of little ones which has been the heritage of the Chinese from time unknown. *The Book of Odes*, quoted in Mr. Ku Hung-ming's eloquent translation of the *Chung Yung*, or *Conduct of Life*, for this Series, says :

When wives and children and their sires are one,  
'Tis like the harp and lute in unison.  
When brothers live in concord and in peace,  
The strains of harmony shall never cease.  
The lamp of happy union lights the home,  
And bright days follow when the children come.

With the Chinese the natural joys of life have always been the most sought after. Home, family, friendship, landscape, and flowers—these are the pleasures which they delight in. The religion of Confucius is the religion of daily life. On the side of the parent there is responsibility ; on the side of the child, obedience, but not a blind one. Of the responsibility of parents there is no question. Confucius himself laid down the law when he sentenced a father, who had brought an accusation against his son, to be imprisoned with him. On being remonstrated with, he made this memorable reply : “ Am I to punish for a breach of filial piety one who has never been taught to be filially minded ? Is not he who neglects to teach his son his duties equally guilty with the son who fails in them ? Crime is not inherent in human nature, and therefore the father in the family and the government in the State are responsible for the crimes committed against filial piety and the public laws.”

On the other hand, the obedient son must be able to discriminate and not follow blindly, when the father is at fault. In the *Li Chi*, or *Book of Rites*, it is written : “ When his parents are in error, the son must remonstrate with them with respect and gently. If they do not receive his reproof, he must strive more and more to be dutiful and respectful towards them till they are pleased, and then he must again point out their fault.”

The Chinese give respect to the living, and also reverence the dead. It is from the past that they have tried to learn, and the past is a pathway which the feet of spirits have trodden and made luminous. And, moreover, no man can escape from his ancestors, even if he go to the uttermost parts of the earth and dwell among strangers. Over the heads of the family the politician, ancient and modern, looks to the State. But China, from the shelter and security of her myriad bulwarks, has watched the sun of many empires rise and set.

### NOTE

IN preparing this little book for the press, I am indebted to Mr. Lionel Giles and Mr. L. Cranmer-Byng for their kind assistance. Mr. Giles has revised the English spelling of Chinese names according to the system almost universally adopted by sinologues to-day ; while Mr. Cranmer-Byng has made himself responsible for the Introduction. As regards *The Twenty-four Examples of Filial Duty*, due acknowledgment must be made to Vol. VI. of *The Chinese Repository*, which contains the only complete translation of these stories, and has been extensively drawn upon for the present work.

# THE DOCTRINE OF FILIAL DUTY

## CHAPTER I

### THE MEANING OF FILIAL DUTY

ONCE upon a time Confucius was sitting in his study, having his disciple Tsêng Ts'an to attend upon him. He asked Tsêng Ts'an: "Do you know by what virtue and power the good Emperors of old made the world peaceful, the people to live in harmony with one another, and the inferior contented under the control of their superiors?" To this Tsêng Ts'an, rising from his seat, replied: "I do not know this, for I am not clever." Then said Confucius: "The duty of children to their parents is the fountain whence all other virtues spring, and also the starting-point from which we ought to begin our education. Now take your seat, and I will explain this. Our body and hair and skin are all derived from our parents, and therefore we have no right to injure any of them in the least. This is the first duty of a child.

“To live an upright life and to spread the great doctrines of humanity must win good reputation after death, and reflect great honour upon our parents. This is the last duty of a son.

“Hence the first duty of a son is to pay a careful attention to every want of his parents. The next is to serve his government loyally; and the last to establish a good name for himself.

“So it is written in the *T'a Ya*<sup>1</sup>: ‘You must think of your ancestors and continue to cultivate the virtue which you inherit from them.’ ”

## CHAPTER II

### THE FILIAL DUTY OF AN EMPEROR

IN order to prevent the people from treating their parents with cruelty, the Emperor first sets an example to them by showing a dear love to his mother; and in order to teach them not to treat their parents with rudeness, he first treats his parents with respect. Having loved and respected his own parents, his good conduct will influence the minds of his people, and his good example will be followed by them.

So it is written in the *Fu Hsing*<sup>2</sup>: “When the Emperor has done a good act, millions will be benefited.”

<sup>1</sup> A section of the *Canon of Poetry*.

<sup>2</sup> The 27th of the books of Chou in the *Canon of History*.

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### CHAPTER III

#### THE FILIAL DUTY OF FEUDAL PRINCES

ANY man will be secure in his position, however high it may be, if he does not behave himself in a haughty manner ; and will be ever able to keep his wealth if he is frugal and careful in his expenses.

When he is able to secure himself in his high position, he can, of course, remain unimpaired in his dignity ; and where he can keep his wealth, he will always remain rich. Having placed himself in a position of honour, and secured the possession of his wealth, he will be able to protect his country and further the welfare of his people. This is the filial duty of a feudal Prince.

In the *Shih Ching* it is thus written : " Be careful as though you were standing upon the brink of a high precipice or treading on thin ice."

### CHAPTER IV

#### THE FILIAL DUTY OF HIGH OFFICERS

IF we do not put on such dress as our good Emperors of old would forbid, if we do not speak such words as they would forbid, and if we do not behave ourselves in such a way as they would forbid, then we shall be always right in what we say and what we do. If so, then nobody



will be able to find fault with our words or with our deeds, and therefore we shall be able to keep our family from being visited with any serious misfortune, and to offer sacrifices to our ancestors for ever. This is the filial duty of a high officer.

In the *Shih Ching* it is thus written: "Be diligent every minute to attend upon the one person" (meaning the Emperor).

## CHAPTER V

### THE FILIAL DUTY OF THE LITERARY CLASS

FROM the manner in which we should treat our father we learn how to treat our mother. The love toward them is the same. From the manner in which we should treat our father we also learn how to serve our August Master. The respect shown to them is the same. To our mother we show love, to our August Master respect, while to our father, both love and respect. If we can serve our August Master with such feelings as we have toward our father, then loyalty is shown; and if we treat venerable persons with respect, then harmony will reign in the circle of our life. Not failing to treat the August Master with loyalty and the venerable with respect, we shall be able to make ourselves secure in our high position and to offer sacrifices to our ancestors for ever.

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This is the filial duty of the Literati. So in the *Shih Ching* it is written: "Do not do anything in the course of a day which will reflect dishonour upon your ancestors."

### CHAPTER VI

#### THE FILIAL DUTY OF COMMON PEOPLE

To do the necessary in every season (such as growing crops in spring and reaping harvest in autumn), to do the utmost to make lands as fertile as possible, and to be frugal in their expense, in order to keep their parents in comfort, is the filial duty of the common people.

From the Emperor downwards to the common people, every one has the same duty imposed upon him, and there is no instance in which we can find that a man cannot fulfil this duty.

### CHAPTER VII

#### THE "THREE POWERS" <sup>1</sup>

ON hearing what Confucius said about filial duty, Tsêng Tzŭ remarked: "How great is the use of filial duty!" Here Confucius continued: "Filial duty is the constant doctrine of Heaven, the natural righteousness of Earth, and the practical duty of man. Every member of the community ought to observe it with the greatest

<sup>1</sup> I.e. Heaven, Earth, and Man.

care. We do what is dictated by Heaven and what is good for the general public in order to organise the community. On this account our education is wide-spread, though it is not compulsory, and our government is sound, though it is not rigorous. The effect of education upon the minds of the people was well known to the good Emperors of old. They made every person love his parents by loving their own parents first. They induced every person to cultivate his virtue by expounding the advantages of virtue to him. They behaved themselves respectfully and humbly, so that the people might not quarrel with one another. They trained the people with ceremonial observances, and educated them with music so that they might live in harmony. They told the people what things they liked or disliked to see done, so that they might understand what they were forbidden to do.

In the *Shih Ching* it is thus written: "The dignified statesman is always the subject of the attention of the people."

## CHAPTER VIII

### FILIAL DUTY IN GOVERNMENT

THE good Emperors of old ruled the Empire by means of filial duty, and dared not neglect the ministers of their vassal states. How much less

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the dukes, marquises, earls, viscounts, and barons ! They thereby gained the goodwill of all their vassal states, which sent their deputies to represent them in any sacrifice offered to the ancestors of their Supreme Master. This is what we mean by saying that the good Emperors of old governed the world by filial duty.

As to the vassal states, their rulers dared not treat widowers and widows with insolence ; how then could they dare act so towards the literary class and the people ? Hence they gained the good-will of their subjects, and the latter would join them in offering sacrifices to their ancestors.

Now we may say a word about a family. If the head of a family do not act haughtily towards his servant, he cannot act so to his wife and children. Hence he will gain the goodwill of all his people, and they will help him in the fulfilment of his filial duty. In such a family the parents must feel happy when they are living, and their spirits must come to enjoy the sacrifice when they are dead. By the principle of filial duty the whole world can be made happy and all calamities and dangers can be averted. Such was the government of the Empire by the enlightened rulers of old, in accordance with the principle of filial duty.

In the *Shih Ching* it is thus written : “ If you adorn yourself with the highest virtue, the whole world will follow you.”

## CHAPTER IX

## GOVERNMENT BY THE SAGE

TSÊNG Tzŭ asked : " Is filial piety the highest of all the virtues possessed by a great sage ? " To this Confucius replied : " There is nothing so great in the world as man, and there is nothing so great in a man as filial piety. The first duty of a son is to venerate his parent, and in order to show reverence for his dead father he has to offer him sacrifice when he offers sacrifices to Heaven. A man who had done this was the Duke of Chou. When he offered sacrifices to Heaven in a suburban district, he also offered a sacrifice to his deceased ancestor Hou Chi, and when he offered sacrifice to Heaven at the temple named Ming Tang, he also made one to his deceased father Wên Wang. His good action produced such an effect that all the feudal barons at that time came to assist him in performing the ceremony of offering sacrifice to Heaven. It is therefore evident that there is nothing so great in human nature as filial piety. The feeling of affection is fostered during the time of infancy, and from that affection springs reverence. Since every man has a natural reverence, the great sages of the time teach him how and when to show it ; and since he has a natural feeling of affection, they teach him when and how to cultivate it. As the teachings of these sages are based on the principle of filial

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piety, their doctrine is propagated without effort, and their government is effectual without resorting to force. The affection between a father and a son is natural, and also a source from which springs the reverence which a minister ought to show to his sovereign. When parents have a son born to them, the regular line of descent in the family is thereby secured. This is the greatest duty in family life. We must treat our parents with the same reverence as is shown to our sovereign, because we receive boundless kindness from them and are under a natural obligation to do so. If any one does not love his parents, but others, he is a rebel against virtue; and if any one does not respect his parents, but others, he is also a rebel against the standard of rites. Any action which is against the law of nature will certainly not be an example for the public; and any one who gets a high position, such as that of a ruler, by undue influence instead of by good actions, will be despised by good men. As to the latter, they say what they ought to say, and do what they think is good for the public. Their virtue and justice are estimable, their actions are worthy of being followed, their behaviour is creditable, and their manner is correct in every way. If such persons are rulers of a state, they will afford to the people a good example to follow and will also inspire them with reverence and affection. This is principally the cause of their being suc-

cessful in propagating their doctrines, and in effectually carrying on their government. Do you not remember what is said in the *Shih Ching*?— ‘Look at that good man. How correct his behaviour is!’ ”

## CHAPTER X

### THE FILIAL DUTY OF A SON

CONFUCIUS said: “A filial son has five duties to perform to his parents: (1) He must venerate them in daily life. (2) He must try to make them happy in every possible way, especially when the meal is served. (3) He must take extra care of them when they are sick. (4) He ought to show great sorrow for them when they are dead. (5) He must offer sacrifices to his deceased parents with the utmost solemnity. If he fulfils these duties, then he can be considered as having done what ought to be done by a son.”

A son ought not to feel proud of the high position he occupies, ought not to show dissatisfaction with his inferior position to that of others, and ought not to act against the natural feeling of the public. If he is proud and haughty when he is a high official, he will soon bring ruin upon himself and his family; if he feels dissatisfied with his lower position, he may be led to do illegal acts; and if he does anything contrary to the public feeling, he will probably be the



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object of attacks. Having thus wronged himself, he cannot be considered as a filial son, although he treats his parents every day to luxurious meals.

### CHAPTER XI

#### THE FIVE PUNISHMENTS

THE criminal law consists principally of five punishments, which are directed against three thousand offences. Of them, disobedience to one's parents is considered the most heinous crime.

To threaten the sovereign with force is an act which shows that the wrongdoer does not know the duty of an inferior to a superior ; to say anything against the government founded by the wise men of many generations gone by is an act which shows that the speaker does not know what law is ; and to say that a son need not be filial to his parents is also an act which shows that the speaker does not know what is the natural relation and duty between a son and parents. Such acts will no doubt lead the man to a wrong course of life.

### CHAPTER XII

#### AMPLIFICATION OF THE "IMPORTANT DOCTRINE"

CONFUCIUS said : "The best way to teach the people to love their sovereign is for the sovereign

first to love his own parents ; to teach them to be polite to each other is for the sovereign himself first to be polite to all his elders ; and to improve bad manners and customs is for him first to pay attention to the composition of the music played in the country.

"What is etiquette ? It is simply due respect to one's elders. If I respect the parents, the son will be pleased ; if I respect the elder brothers, the younger ones will be pleased ; and if I respect the sovereign, all the ministers will be pleased. I respect only one person, but I please thousands upon thousands. Those to whom the respect is paid are few, and those whom I please are many. This is what is called an 'important doctrine.' "

## CHAPTER XIII

### AMPLIFICATION OF "THE HIGHEST VIRTUE"

CONFUCIUS said : "When a ruler wishes to teach his people to love their parents, he does not go to their family every day to teach them. He teaches them by his showing reverence to all old people. In the same manner he teaches his people to show respect to their elders by doing so first ; and to be loyal to their ruler by his doing duty to his superiors first.

"The *Shih Ching* says, 'The behaviour of the ruler is so good that he is loved by the people as

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their parent.' A ruler could not have been so loved by his people had he not possessed the highest virtue."

### CHAPTER XIV

#### AMPLIFICATION OF "RAISING THE REPUTATION"

CONFUCIUS said: "A true gentleman is always filial to his parents, and in order to fulfil his duty to them to the fullest extent, he also serves his August Master with patriotism. He always shows reverence to his elder brothers, and in order to fulfil his duty to them to the fullest extent, he does the same towards every one who is older than he.

"As he can maintain order in his family affairs, so he can do the same in the government. He bases the principle of the government of a State upon that of a ruling family, and the consequent success will make his name to be remembered throughout generations to come."

### CHAPTER XV

#### THE QUESTION OF REMONSTRANCE IN CONNECTION WITH FILIAL DUTY

TSÊNG Tzŭ said: "I have heard all that you said about parental love, filial love, reverence to elders, how to treat parents every day, and how

## THE QUESTION OF REMONSTRANCE 29

to please them by making oneself known for good conduct ; and now I will venture to ask you whether it is filial that a son should obey every command of his father, whether right or wrong ? ”

“ What do you say ?—what do you say ? ” replied Confucius. “ Once upon a time there was a certain Emperor who would have lost his empire through his wickedness, but that he had seven good ministers who often checked his illegal actions by strong protests ; there was also a feudal baron who would have lost his feudal estate through wantonness, but for the fact that he had five good men who often made strong remonstrances to him ; and there was also a statesman who would have brought frightful calamity upon his family, but for the fact that he had three good servants who often strongly advised him not to do what he ought not.

“ If a man has a good friend to resist him in doing bad actions, he will have his reputation preserved ; so if a father has a son to resist his wrong commands, he will be saved from committing serious faults.

“ When the command is wrong, a son should resist his father, and a minister should resist his August Master.

“ The maxim is, ‘ Resist when wrongly commanded.’ Hence how can he be called filial who obeys his father when he is commanded to do wrong ? ”

## CHAPTER XVI

## THE INFLUENCE AND FRUIT OF FILIAL PIETY

THE good Emperors of old were not only filial to their parents, but also to the Supreme Father and Mother—that is, Heaven and the Earth. When an Emperor can live in harmony with his elders, there will be harmony throughout his dominion between superiors and inferiors; and when he is filial to the Supreme Father and Mother, he will be blessed by them.

Although the Emperor is the highest of all ranks, yet he still has some one to respect. He has his father and elder brothers.

Why do we offer sacrifices to our ancestors in our family shrine? Because we ought not to forget them. Why must we cultivate our minds and be circumspect in our actions? Because we do not wish to bring disgrace upon the name of our ancestors. If we can show respect to them when we offer them sacrifices in our family shrine, we shall be blessed by the Supreme Father and Mother. Filiality to parents and reverence to elders will be known to the Supreme Being, and will be followed by the people in every part of the world; no place can remain unaffected by their influence. In the *Shih Ching* it is said that “from east to west and from north to south there is no one who does not submit to rule.”

## CHAPTER XVII

## SERVING THE SOVEREIGN

CONFUCIUS said : " A good man always endeavours, while he is in the service of his sovereign, to express the utmost loyalty during audience with his August Master, and thinks at his leisure how to repair any wrong his August Master may have done. He will carry out any praiseworthy schemes projected by his master, and will correct any fault which he may commit. In this way a great affection will be fostered between them.

" Thus in the *Shih Ching* it is written : ' Although the minister may be far away from his master, yet his affection will not be affected by the distance. He is so attached to him that he thinks of him every day.' "

## CHAPTER XVIII

## MOURNING FOR ONE'S PARENTS

CONFUCIUS said : " When a filial son loses his parent, he, of course, cannot help crying piteously. He cannot feel happy when he hears music. He will have no appetite for food, however tempting a savoury. He will greet no visitor, have no regard for elegance of speech, and will put on a mourning-dress instead of a beautiful one. All these tell us the extent of his sorrow for his lost

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parent. What is meant by the saying that he must try to eat something after three days from the death of his parent, though he has no appetite for it? It teaches us that although we have to show great sorrow for the dead, yet we must not sacrifice ourselves on their account, and that we must not carry self-mortification so far as to destroy our life. This is the doctrine laid down by good men of old. That mourning only extends to the period of three years shows that there is a limit for our sorrow.

“For the corpse we make a coffin and some clothes. We set forth the sacrificial vessels, and at the sight of them grief breaks forth afresh. The women beat their breasts, the men stamp their feet, and with weeping and wailing escort the coffin to its resting-place. For its burial we buy a well-drained ground. In memory of our deceased parent we build a shrine. For the purpose of showing our remembrance we offer sacrifices every spring and autumn.

“When our parents are alive, we should treat them with love and respect. When they are dead, we should have sorrow for them. By doing so we shall have performed the duty of mankind, and have done what ought to be done by a filial son, and by the living to the dead.



## THE TWENTY-FOUR EXAMPLES

### No. I

#### *The Filial Piety that influenced Heaven*

YÜ SHUN, the son of Ku Sou, had an exceedingly filial disposition ; his father, however, was stupid, his mother perverse, and his younger brother, Hsiang, very conceited. His actions are related in the *Shang Shu*, in the *Chung Yung*, and in the works of Mencius. Those who speak of him say that Shun cultivated the hills of Li (in the province of Shansi), where he had elephants to plough his fields and birds to weed the grain. So widespread was the renown of his virtue that the Emperor Yao heard of him, and sent his nine sons to serve him, and gave to him two of his daughters in marriage, and afterwards resigned to him the imperial dignity.

Of all those whose virtue and filial duty deserve to be illustrated, Shun is pre-eminent ; and his example, in obeying his parents, is worthy of being handed down to posterity, through myriads of ages. Once he was in great danger in a well, into which he was commanded by his father to descend, and his brother cast down

stones upon him ; again, he was in a granary, when it was set on fire ; but from these, as well as from many other dangers, he escaped unhurt. He fished, burned pottery, ploughed and sowed, with great toil on the hills of Li. He laboriously performed all these duties, but his parents were not affected, while his brother Hsiang became more insolent and overbearing. His parents alleged crimes against him, but Shun could not find that he had done wrong ; he loved and revered them, though they did not requite him with affection. His feelings were grieved at these manifold troubles, and with strong crying and tears he invoked Heaven.

His perfect sincerity was effectual to renovate his family ; his parents became pleasant, and his brother more conciliatory and virtuous. Heaven also considered his excellency to be great, and regarded him as truly good, thus establishing his reputation so firmly that it was perpetuated to, and influenced, succeeding ages. Even Confucius is regarded as elevated but a little above Shun, and I would praise and extol them both to coming generations.

## No. II

### *Affection shown in tasting Soups and Medicines*

The Emperor Wên of the Han dynasty, the third son of his father, Kao Tsu, was appointed

Prince over the country of Tai. His own mother, Po, was Queen-dowager, and Wên was constant in his attendance on her. She was ill for three years, during which time his eyelids did not close, nor was the girdle of his dress unloosed; and she took none of the soups and medicines prepared for her till he had tasted them. This benevolence and filial affection was heard of throughout the empire.

Wên received direction to go and arrange the imperial sacrifices, and requested his mother to accompany him to the royal domains. Morning and evening he visited her in her own apartments, and handed her the fragrant dishes. If the provisions had lost their flavour, he was vexed; and when tasting the medicines he commanded perfect silence. The live-long night his girdle was not loosed, nor for three years were his eyelids closed. By as much as his animal spirits were exhausted, by so much the more did his heart become fixed on the subject of its affection; and for a long time his thoughts were not distracted. Such filial love and virtue so moved upon Heaven's kind regard, that it wrought upon his father to confer the throne upon him as his patrimony.

### No. III

#### *Gnawing her Finger pained his Heart*

During the Choudynasty there lived a lad named Tsêng Ts'an, a disciple of Confucius, who served

his mother very dutifully. Tsêng was in the habit of going to the hills to collect faggots ; and once, while he was thus absent, many guests came to his house, towards whom his mother was at a loss to know how to act. She, while expecting her son, who delayed his return, began to gnaw her fingers. Tsêng suddenly felt a pain in his heart, and took up his bundle of faggots in order to return home ; and when he saw his mother, he kneeled and begged to know what was the cause of her anxiety. She replied : " There have been some guests here who came from a great distance, and I bit my finger in order to arouse you to return to me."

The faculties of mind and body in both mother and son sprang originally from the same source, and are alike ; but in common men this connection is broken and interrupted, and they are dull and stupid. Those sages whose nature is heavenly differ from the rest of mankind ; and virtue, as in a breath, permeates their whole souls. At a certain time, when Tsêng was absent to collect faggots, visitors came and knocked at his door in great haste ; and as there was no man at home ready to receive them, his mother was much grieved. He had entered the dense fog on the hills and did not know where he was, when his mother leaned against the door-post and gnawed her fingers as if she would go in quest of him. Her son in the hills is suddenly

seized with a pain in his heart, and quickly takes up his bundle of faggots to return; although distant, he sympathises with his mother's grief and complaint. The hearts of mother and son are mutually affected, one influencing the other, in the same manner as the amber draws small straws and the loadstone attracts the slender needle. From the remotest period sages have been able to control their dispositions, and in the deepest silence have revolved their actions as in a breath. The moving influence that such minds have on each other the generality of men cannot understand. The devotedness with which they serve their parents and the respect with which they cherish them—who can comprehend.

#### No. IV

*Clad in a Single Garment, he was obedient  
to his Mother*

During the Chou dynasty lived Min Sun, a disciple of Confucius, who in early life lost his mother. His father subsequently married another wife, who bore him two children, but disliked Sun. In winter she clothed him in garments made of rushes, while her own children wore cotton clothes. Min was employed in driving his father's chariot, and his body was so cold that the reins dropped from his hands, for which

carelessness his father chastised him ; yet he did not vindicate himself. When his father knew the circumstances, he determined to divorce his second wife ; but Sun said, “ Whilst mother remains, one son is cold ; if mother departs, three sons will be destitute.” The father desisted from his purpose ; and after this the mother was led to repentance, and became a good and virtuous parent.

The filial piety of the renowned Shun influenced Heaven, whilst that of Min renovated mankind. If Heaven be influenced, all below it will be transformed ; if men be renovated, from them will spring a power able to cause their families to become good. In all ages men have exhibited a great love for their wives ; but dutiful children have often met with unkindness. Min carefully concealed all his grievances, and refused to indulge in any complaint ; even while suffering severely from cold and hunger, he maintained his affection unabated. During the long period which he endured this oppressive treatment, his good disposition became manifest ; and by his own conduct he was able to maintain the harmony of the family unimpaired. His father and mother were influenced by his filial devotion ; and his brothers joined in extolling his virtues. All his friends and acquaintances, with united voice, celebrated his merits ; and the men of his native village joyfully combined to spread the fame

of his actions. The memory of his agreeable countenance and pleasing manners was perpetuated to the remotest ages ; and his example was in many respects like that of Shun, whose parents were equally perverse.

## No. V

### *He carried Rice for his Parents*

In the Chou dynasty lived Chung Yu, also a disciple of Confucius, who, because his family was poor, usually ate herbs and coarse pulse ; and he also went more than a hundred li to procure rice for his parents. Afterwards, when they were dead, he went south to the country of Chu, where he was made commander of a hundred companies of chariots. There he became rich, storing up grain in myriads of measures, reclining upon cushions, and eating food served to him in numerous dishes ; but, sighing, he said : " Although I should now desire to eat coarse herbs and bring rice for my parents, it cannot be ! "

" Alas ! " said Chung Yu, " although I was a scholar, yet my parents were poor ; and how was I to nourish them ? " Exhausted he travelled the long road and cheerfully brought rice for his parents. Pleasantly he endured the toil, and exerted his utmost strength without any commendation. At that time his lot in life was hard and unfortunate, and he little expected the



official honours he afterwards enjoyed. But when his parents were dead, and he had become rich and honourable, enjoying all the luxuries of life, then he was unhappy and discontented ; not cheerful as in the days of his poverty, nor happy as when he ministered to his parents' wants.

### No. VI

*With Sports and Embroidered Robes he amused  
his Parents*

In the Chou dynasty there flourished Lao Lai Tzŭ, who was very obedient and reverent towards his parents, manifesting his dutifulness by exerting himself to provide them with every delicacy. Although upwards of seventy years of age, he declared that he was not yet too old, and, dressed in gaudy-coloured garments, would frisk and cut capers like a child in front of his parents. He would also take up buckets of water and try to carry them into the house ; but, feigning to slip, would fall to the ground, wailing and crying like a child ; and all these things he did in order to divert his parents.

In the country of Ch'u lived Lao Lai Tzŭ, who, when so old that he had lost nearly all his teeth, made every effort to rejoice and comfort his parents, constantly endeavouring to gladden their hearts. At times he imitated the playfulness of

a little child, and arraying himself in gaudy and variegated clothes, amused them by his strutting and gambols. He would likewise purposely fall on the ground, kicking and wailing to the utmost of his power. His mother was delighted, and manifested her joy in her countenance. Thus did Lai forget his age in order to rejoice the hearts of his parents; and affection, harmony, and joy prevailed among the family. If this ardent love for his parents had been insincere and constrained, how could it be referred to as worthy of imitation?

## NO. VII

### *With Deer's Milk he supplied his Parents*

In the time of the Chou dynasty lived Yen, who possessed a very filial disposition. His father and mother were aged, and both were afflicted with sore eyes, to cure which they desired to have some deer's milk. Yen concealed himself in the skin of a deer, and went deep into the forests, among the herds of deer, to obtain some of their milk for his parents. While amongst the trees the hunters saw him, and were about to shoot at him with their arrows, when Yen disclosed to them his true character and related the history of his family, with the reasons for his conduct.

Do his parents desire some milk from the deer? He is not deterred by the obstacles in the way of

procuring it ; but clothing himself in a hairy garment, he goes carefully seeking for it among the multitudes of wild beasts. He closely imitated the cry, *yew, yew*, of the fawns, watching for the tracks of the herds. By this mode he obtained the sweet secretion ; he also surprised the hunters whom he met in the deep and lonely forest.

### NO. VIII

#### *He sold himself to bury his Father*

During the Han dynasty lived Tung Yung, whose family was so very poor that when his father died, he was obliged to sell himself in order to procure money to bury his remains. After this he went to another place to gain the means of redeeming himself ; and on his way he met a lady who desired to become his wife, and go with him to his master's house. She went with Tung, and wove three hundred pieces of silk, which being completed in two months, they returned home ; and on the way, having reached the shade of the cassia-tree where they met before, the lady bid him adieu and vanished from his sight.

Tung could not endure to behold his father's bones lying exposed, but had not sufficient means to bury them. He saw that his household goods were not sufficient, and he said : " This little body of mine, what is the use of it ? If I sell it, I can

redeem it again, and thus bury my father, who will be saved from dishonour." His filial piety moved Heaven to direct a female spirit in human form to come and help him in fulfilling his engagement ; she wove three hundred pieces of silk, and thus procured the redemption of a man of truly filial heart.

## No. IX

*He hired himself out as a Labourer to support his Mother*

In the time of the Han dynasty lived Chiang Ko, who, when young, lost his father, and afterwards lived alone with his mother. Times of trouble arising, which caused them much distress, he took his mother on his back, and fled. On the way he many times met with companies of robbers, who would have compelled him to go with them and become a bandit, but Chiang entreated them with tears to spare him, saying that he had his aged mother with him ; and the robbers could not bear to kill him. Altering his course, he came into the district of Hsia-p'ei, extremely impoverished and reduced, where he hired himself out and supported his mother ; and such was his diligence that he was able to supply her with whatever she personally required.

Passing over the hills and wading through the streams, he carried his mother with much

difficulty. It was during a year of famine, when all the inhabitants of the land were in confusion from the scarcity of food, and engagements were frequent between the soldiers and the bandits, and signal fires were lighted on the high hills. Chiang was fearful lest the robbers should meet him on the road and plunder him ; and they did seize him, regardless of his cries and tears, and were about to rob him ; but when they knew of his filial piety and affection for his mother, they permitted him to proceed. While journeying, he was too poor to procure any food beyond the bare necessities of life ; and because he could not provide comforts and delicacies for his mother, he was grieved as if it had been his fault. He went and hired himself for labour ; with the greatest diligence he adhered to his purpose to maintain his mother ; and soon the stranger obtained an abundance of food and clothing. This success caused his mother to rejoice, and they were both delighted, she forgetting her former hardships in the joy that filled her breast.

### No. X

*He fanned the Pillow and warmed the Bedclothes*

In the Han dynasty lived Huang Hsiang, who when only nine years old lost his mother, whom he loved so ardently and remembered so well that all the villagers praised his filial duty. He

was employed in the severest toil, and served his father with entire obedience. In summer, when the weather was warm, he fanned and cooled his father's pillow and bed; and in winter, when it was cold, he warmed the bed-clothes with his body. The magistrate sent him an honorary banner, as a mark of distinction.

When the heat of summer made it difficult to sleep quietly, the lad knew what would be for the comfort of his venerated parent. Taking a fan, he slowly waved it about the silken curtains, and the cool air, entering, enveloped and filled the pillows and bed. In winter, when the snow threatened to crush in the roof and the fierce wind shook the fences, and the cold penetrated to the bones, making it hazardous to unloose the girdle, then Hsiang warmed his father's bed that he might not fear, because of the cold, to enter the "place of dreams."

## No. XI

### *The Gushing Fountain and the Frisking Carp*

In the Han dynasty lived Chiang Shih, who served his mother with perfect obedience; and his wife P'ang also fulfilled her mother-in-law's commands without the least reluctance. The old lady loved to drink of the water from the river six or seven li away from her cottage, and P'ang used to go to draw it and hand it to her.

She was also fond of carp, and when it was obtained, deeming herself unable to consume alone what her children with great toil and trouble continually prepared for her, usually invited some of the neighbours to feast with her. By the side of the cottage there suddenly gushed a fountain, the taste of whose waters was like that of the river, and it also produced two living fishes daily. These were taken out and prepared by Chiang Shih for his mother.

The fish from the river were fresh and delicious, and the water was sweet ; the mother of Chiang Shih wished to taste of both daily. Her son went to purchase the fish and her daughter-in-law to bring the water ; as constantly as the revolution of morning and evening did they exert themselves in this arduous labour. Having obtained the fish and water, her countenance brightened, and, laughing, she invited in one of the neighbours to rejoice and partake of them with her. Sitting opposite at the table, together they ate them, she foolishly not even regarding, but totally forgetting, her son and daughter, who with so much trouble had prepared them for her. Heaven took pity on these two filial children, and employed its divine power to assist them, sending a spirit to strike the earth with an axe which caused a perennial spring to bubble forth. The taste of the water from the fountain was like that from the river, and two fish continually sported



about in it, which henceforth Chiang Shih took out for their sustenance, nor was there any fear of the supply failing. To procure the fish now no money was needed, to obtain the water no long and weary walk was to be taken. It was as if the productions of this river and of the water were transferred into the midst of the cottage ; and Chiang Shih could support his family with ease for many years.

## No. XII

### *He carved Wood and served his Parents*

During the Han dynasty lived Ting Lan, whose parents both died when he was young, before he could obey and support them ; and he reflected that for all the trouble and anxiety he had caused them, no recompense had yet been given. He then carved wooden images of his parents, and served them as if they had been alive. For a long time his wife would not reverence them ; and one day, taking a bodkin, she pricked their fingers in derision. Blood flowed immediately from the wound ; and seeing Ting coming, the images wept. He inquired into the circumstances, and forthwith divorced his wife.

He remembers his parents, but cannot see them ; so he carves wood to represent their persons. He believes that their spirits are now the same as when they were alive, and his quietless

heart trusts that their spirits have entered the carved images. He cannot rest until he has made their statues, so strong is his desire to nourish and reverence them. He now reveres them, although dead, as if they were alive ; and hopes they will condescend to dwell in his ancestral hall.

### No. XIII

*For his Mother's Sake he would bury his Child*

In the days of the Han dynasty lived Kuo Chü, who was very poor. He had one child three years old ; and such was his poverty that his mother usually divided her portion of food with this little one. Kuo says to his wife : " We are so poor that our mother cannot be supported, for the child divides with her the portion of food that belongs to her. Why not bury this child ? Another child may be born to us, but a mother, once gone, will never return." His wife did not venture to object to the proposal, and Kuo immediately digs a hole about three cubits deep, when suddenly he lights upon a pot of gold, and on the metal reads the following inscription : " Heaven bestows this treasure upon Kuo Chü, the dutiful son ; the magistrate may not seize it, nor shall the neighbours take it from him."

What a foolish action, that the sage Kuo should be willing to bury his own child ! Fearing lest his mother should not have enough to eat, he is

willing to resign his child to death ; but when it is dead, what relief will there be for the grief of its affectionate grandmother ? When a number of cares come at some future time, who then will be able to disperse them if the child is dead ? But at this time the reflection that his mother would be in want filled his breast with grief, and he had no time to think of the future when he would be childless. Heaven having given him a dutiful mind, caused him to take a light hoe for digging the earth. Together Kuo and his wife went, sorrowing and distressed, by the way, until they came to a very hilly place, where they stopped. Having dug into the ground, suddenly a gleam of light shot forth, and the pot of yellow gold which Heaven had deposited there was seen. Taking it up, they clasped their child with ecstasy in their arms and returned home ; for now they had sufficient to support their whole family in plenty.

#### No. XIV

##### *He seized the Tiger and saved his Father*

In the Han dynasty lived Yang Hsiang, a lad of fourteen, who was in the habit of following his father to the fields to cut grain. Once a tiger seized his father, and was slowly carrying him off, when Yang, anxious for his father and forgetting

himself, although he had no iron weapon in his hand, rushed forward and seized the tiger by the neck. The beast let the prey fall from his teeth, and fled, and Yang's father was thus saved from injury and death.

A tiger suddenly appears in the borders of the field, and seizes the man as lightly as he catches a sheep, and drags him off. Yang Hsiang, seeing the sudden peril of his father, was vexed that he had no weapon with an iron head ; but being strongly excited and his feelings roused, he ran forward in the path, crying with a loud voice, and grasped the tiger by the neck. The frightened animal fled, nor stopped in its rapid course until it reached the high hills. Yang then, in a gentle manner, raised his father up and led him home, endeavouring to soothe his mind and dispel his fears, and also presented him the golden wine-cup. Among the great number of sages whose reputations are famous, how few of them have been devoted and filial at the hazard of their lives ! But this lad, quite young and fair, as soon as he saw his father's danger, risked his own life ; surely his fame will spread throughout the country. We have heard of the lady T'i Ying, who saved her father from banishment, and of young Chu O, who lost her life in trying to rescue her father from drowning ; and I think that Yang Hsiang will form a trio with them, and the three be celebrated in the same ode.

## No. XV

*He collected Mulberries to support his Mother*

During the Han dynasty lived Ts'ai Shun, whose father died when he was young, and who served his mother very dutifully. It happened that, during the troubles of the time, when Wang Mang was plotting to usurp the throne, there were years of scarcity, in which he could not procure food, and Ts'ai was compelled to gather mulberries, which he assorted, putting them into two vessels. The red-eyebrowed robber \* saw him, and inquired why he did thus. Ts'ai replied : " The black and ripe berries I give to my mother, the yellow and unripe ones I eat myself." The bandit admired his filial affection, and rewarded him with three measures of white rice and the leg of an ox.

Anxious and fearful, he seeks for food : untiring in his toil, he takes up his baskets and penetrates the thickets of the distant forests, where he finds many mulberry-trees. His hunger now has something to satisfy its cravings ; he also remembers his mother, and that he must carry some to her. The ripe and unripe berries he does not put together, but divides them, so that mother and son can each have their proper portion. The chieftain heard of his conduct, and highly praised him, conferring a gift upon him,

\* That is, the usurper Wang Mang himself.

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and speaking of his filial piety to all around. Taking up his rice and flesh, Ts'ai returned home to his mother with the food ; and in their joy they even forgot that the year was one of dearth.

### No. XVI

#### *He laid up the Oranges for his Mother*

Lu Chi, a lad six years old, who lived in the time of Han and in the district of Kinkiang, once met the celebrated general Yüan Shu, who gave him a few oranges. Two of them the lad put in his bosom, and when turning to thank the giver, they fell out on the ground. When the general saw this, he said : " Why does my young friend, who is now a guest, put the fruit away in his bosom ? " The youth, bowing, replied : " My mother is very fond of oranges, and I wished, when I returned home, to present them to her." At this answer Yüan was much astonished.

On account of his love for his parent, he would not at first taste the present of fruit, but put into his sleeve to carry home the fragrant and luscious gift. I think that when he saw his mother, her pleasant countenance must have brightened, for the fruit filled his bosom and delighted all who came near him. Lu, although so young, had the true heavenly disposition ; even in the small matter of an orange he did not forget his parent's wishes. Many children are perhaps like this boy,

and those who requite their parents for the care bestowed upon them, we hope, are not few.

## NO. XVII

*On hearing the Thunder he wept at the Tomb*

In the country of Wei lived Wang P'ou, a very dutiful child, whose mother, when alive, was much afraid of thunder. After her death her grave was dug in the hilly forest ; and whenever it blew and rained furiously, and Wang heard the sound of the chariot of the Thunder-goddess rolling along, he hastened immediately to the grave, and, reverently kneeling, besought her with tears, saying : " I am here, dear mother ; do not be alarmed." And afterwards, whenever he read in *The Book of Odes* this sentence, " Children should have deep and ardent affection for their parents, who have endured so much anxiety in nourishing them," the tears flowed abundantly at the recollection of his mother.

Suddenly the black clouds arise from the wilderness, whirled by the wind ; he hears the distant mutter of thunder from the southern hills. Heedless of the rain, hastily he speeds over the rugged path leading to the tomb, and as he goes round the grave his tones of grief and entreaty are heard. The roaring of the dreadful thunder affrights the ears of men, one clap following another in quick succession. If his kind mother,



when alive, always dreaded the voice of Heaven's majesty, how much more will she now, when lying alone in the depths of the wild forest ! If P'ou was with his mother, he knew she would be comforted ; and he thinks that if in the green hills she has a companion, she will not be terrified. Afterwards, being successful, he refused to take the duties of an officer under the Emperor Ssü-ma, because he wished to go frequently to visit the grave of his parent. And when he was going and returning from it, he would weep at the recollection of his mother, and ask himself : " If I have not yet recompensed the care and trouble my mother endured for me, what more can I do ? " And to this day, whenever scholars read the pages of the *Liu O*, they remember how tears bedewed the cheeks of Wang P'ou.

### No. XVIII

*He wept to the Bamboos, and Shoots sprang up*

Mêng Tsung, who lived in the Chin dynasty, lost his father when young. His mother was very ill, and one winter's day she longed to taste a soup made of bamboo shoots, but Mêng could not procure any. At last he went into the bamboo grove, and, clasping the bamboos with his hands, wept bitterly. His filial love moved Nature, and the ground slowly opened, sending forth several shoots, which he gathered and carried home. He

made a soup of them, which his mother tasted, and immediately recovered from her malady.

In winter, when the forests are unsightly and bare, and the bamboos sombre and gloomy, for plants to send forth their branches is surprising and unexpected. But it is impossible to root out the true filial nature from men who have it, although senseless and ignorant people, not understanding its power, ridicule them, calling them mad. The young Mêng Tsung dutifully served his mother, and morning and evening waited on her to receive her commands. His mother was ill, and desired the delicacy of a soup made from bamboo shoots; but in dreary winter, Nature still concealed her fruits awaited. With anxious haste he goes to the cheerless forest, which he enters, seeking for them; but not finding the shoots, he entreats the bamboos with tears. One petition from his inmost heart ascended to the threshold of heaven, and the deities were delighted, laughing with pleasure. A miracle is wrought, the ordinary course of nature is reversed, and suddenly the pearly shoots appear in the forest.

## NO. XIX

### *He slept on Ice to procure Carp*

During the Chin dynasty lived Wang Hsiang, who early lost his mother, and whose stepmother

Chu had no affection for him. His father also, hearing many evil reports against him, in course of time ceased to regard him with kindness. His mother was in the habit of eating fresh fish at her meals, but winter coming, the ice bound up the rivers. Wang unloosed his clothes, and went to sleep on the ice in order to seek them; when suddenly the ice opened of itself, and two carp leapt out, which he took up and carried to his mother. The villagers, hearing of the affair, were surprised, and admired one whose filial duty was the cause of such an unusual event.

The river is firmly bound up by ice, and the fish are hidden in their deep retreats. Perturbed and anxious, Wang goes out to seek the fish, apparently forgetting that it was winter. His resolution is fixed, and although it is at the risk of his life, he will go. He was not dismayed at the coldness of the snow, nor terrified at the fierceness of the winds. Even the wicked spirits were deterred from injuring him, and dared not molest him. If metals and stones can be opened, shall ice be considered too difficult to cleave? The frisking fish came up on the surface of the water, obedient to the hand of him who would take them out. A thousand ages cannot efface the remembrance of the crack in the ice, nor obliterate the fragrant traces of so worthy a deed.

## No. XX

*Wu Mêng fed the Mosquitoes*

Wu Mêng, a lad eight years of age, who lived in the Chin dynasty, was very dutiful to his parents. They were so poor that they could not afford to furnish their beds with mosquito-curtains; and every summer night myriads of mosquitoes attacked them without restraint, feasting upon their flesh and blood. Although there were so many, yet Wu would not drive them away from himself, lest they should go to his parents and annoy them. Such was his filial affection!

The buzzing of the mosquitoes sounds like *ying, ying*, and their united hum is almost equal to thunder. His tired parents are reclining on their bed, their countenances already sunk in slumber. Legions of mosquitoes fiercely attack them, alternately retreating and advancing. The insects disturb the dreaming sleepers, and with annoyance they toss from side to side. Wu sees them sucking his parents' blood, which causes his heart to grieve; his flesh, he thinks, can be easily pierced, but that of his parents is hard to penetrate. Lying on the bed, he threw off his clothes, and soon feeling the pain of their attacks, he cried: "I have no dread of you, nor have you any reason to fear me; although I have a fan, I will not use it, nor will I strike you with

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my hand. I will lie very quietly, and let you gorge to the full."

### No. XXI

This story, commemorating Yü Ch'ien-lou of the southern Ch'i dynasty, is best left out.

### No XXII

The same applies to this story, commemorating the Lady T'ang of the T'ang dynasty.

### No. XXIII

*He resigned Office to seek his Mother*

In the Sung dynasty lived Chu Shou-ch'ang, whose mother, Liu, when he was seven years of age, left the family because she was hated by his father's wife; and mother and son did not see each other for about fifty years. It was during the reign of Shên Tsung that Chu resigned his official station and went into the Ch'in country, and there made an engagement with his family "that he would not return until he had found his mother." He then travelled into T'ung-chou, where he discovered his mother, who at that time was over seventy years of age.

Thus Chu exclaimed: "I have a mother; but, alas! separated, we abide in different villages.

It was not the free will of my mother which led her thus to forsake her son, but the envious mistress who compelled her to go. Without a mother, on whom shall I rely? to whom shall I pour out my sorrows and cares? Now I am grown older and have become an officer, but as yet I have been unable to return the kindness of my parent. In what place, among all the countries under heaven, does she live? I am determined to resign my office and seek her abode, not deterred from the trouble of the search. To effect it, I will part from my family and no longer be a companion with them; I will not return till I find my mother, and they need not await in expectation of me." Heaven directed his way, and he came into Tung-chou, where she resided. When the mother and the son met each other, joy and grief arose together—joy for the meeting after fifty years, sorrow that they had been so long apart. But now, in one hour, all their long accumulated griefs were laid aside, and joy and gladness filled their hearts. Chu possesses the true heavenly disposition, and honours and riches cannot destroy his affection for his mother.

#### No. XXIV

##### *He watched by his Mother's Bedside*

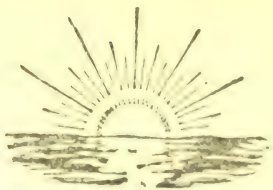
In the Yüan-yü period of the Sung dynasty, Huang T'ing-chien filled the office of prefect.

He was of a very filial disposition, and although honourable and renowned, yet he received his mother's commands with the utmost deference. When his mother was seized with illness, he watched her for a whole year without leaving her bedside or even taking off his clothes ; and at her death he mourned so bitterly that he himself fell ill and nearly lost his life.

Well-written poetry flows along like rills meandering among the hills and valleys. This instance of a dutiful heart has not as yet been brought into much notice. For a whole year he tended his parent in her illness ; and both she who dwelt in the curtained room (*i.e.* his mother) and he who remained in the hall (*i.e.* his father) strove to express the merits of their son. It would be difficult to find another child who would have done so—all would be dilatory and unwilling ; and where shall we meet another who would undergo such drudgery himself with keenness and pleasure ? Although raised to high office, he does not hesitate to perform the most troublesome and minute duties, for he loves his parents ; how then can we suppose that he will change from what he was when young and unhonoured ?



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